

ORGANIZATION RECORDS

AT THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

In 1831 French statesman Alexis de Tocqueville visited America and observed that its citizens had “a vast number” of associations for all purposes. “Associations are established to promote the public safety, commerce, industry, morality, and religion,” he wrote. “There is no end which the human will despairs of attaining through the combined power of individuals united into a society.”

The associations, clubs, and societies de Tocqueville witnessed have an important place in both American and Virginia history. Their existence defines the American right of assembly, and also shows how citizens moved beyond their individual lives to work with others for the benefit of society as a whole. More than 300 groups are represented in the Library of Virginia’s eclectic organization records collection, including the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, the Equal Suffrage League, the Buffalo Circulating Library, the Virginia Federation of Women’s Clubs, a German choral society in nineteenth-century Richmond, and a variety of schools and academies.

The activities of these organizations illuminate social history, reform movements, and educational history. Throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, groups formed orphanages, opened school doors, aided war efforts, and worked toward equal rights for minorities and women. They participated in stock exchanges, professional conventions, conservation efforts, and even horse races. Organizations are an important part of the history of social, political, and economic life in Virginia and the South. Researchers may be rewarded in the organization records collection with membership lists, constitutions, bylaws, charters, correspondence, reports, programs, newsletters, newspaper clippings, and photographs. An in-house guide to the collection is available, and it may be searched in the online Archives and Manuscripts catalog.



AFRICAN AMERICAN AND RELATED ORGANIZATION RECORDS

Organizations of all kinds played an important role in the African American community—professional and business clubs, charity organizations, social settlements and centers, neighborhood clubs, benevolent associations, and institutions devoted to social functions. Records from such organizations chronicle the social history of African Americans and their efforts to combat prejudice and segregation.

One such group was the **Union Burial Ground Society** (Accession 22514). Twenty free African Americans in Richmond formed the Society in 1848 to have proper burials for its members. Records from other organizations include a letter from the **Garrison Lyceum**, which tried to build a library in Richmond for blacks (Accession 33652) and a charter from the **Ex-Slave Mutual Relief Bounty and Pension Association of America**, which organized in an attempt to obtain pensions for freed slaves (Accession 37678). Records from a black fraternity, the **Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World**, document the group’s social and community activities throughout the twentieth century (Accession 38098; online finding aid). More political in nature are the **Negro Industrial and Agricultural Society of Virginia**’s fiery newsletters regarding the 1902 state constitution that severely disenfranchised blacks (Accession 31776).

White organization records also indicate the association of African Americans. In the late 1750s, **Bray Associates** ran a missionary school for slave children in Williamsburg (Accessions 36345–36346, miscellaneous reel 3). Letters among the associates indicate many supporters, though there were certain “misapprehensions” concerning the danger and uselessness of “reading and knowledge . . . in a slave.” Other organization records provide evidence of a similar anxiety over the presence and danger of blacks. In the 1830s, a **committee of vigilance in Richmond** formed to ban abolitionists and their “dangerous and inflammatory” tracts from reaching slaves (Accession 26728).

Letters from the **American Colonization Society** detail a movement in the 1840s and 1850s to send free African Americans to the society’s established colony of Liberia in western Africa (Accession 38673, miscellaneous reel 2611). A letter and broadside from Oscar Faber, White Plume of the Richmond headquarters of the **Ku-Klux Klan**, advised William F. Newcomb to beware of “Loyal Leagues” and to “Admit none of Africs sable” (Accession 20957). Women were offered an equal opportunity for intolerance in an auxiliary organization, the **Women of the Ku Klux Klan**. A copy of the 1926 charter for the **Mollie Pitcher Klan**, in Arlington County, is housed at the Library (Accession 29877).

Not all white organizations had such feelings concerning African Americans. The minutes of the **Middlesex County Temperance Society** in the 1830s include a brief list of slaves who joined (Accession 30621), and the 1884 report from a conference of the **Woman’s Christian Temperance Union of Virginia** mentions the formation of two local unions of black women (Accession 36218, miscellaneous reel 29). The **American Red Cross, Abingdon chapter**, records lists members of the Colored Auxiliary who helped the war effort for World War I (Accession 32410).

WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS

Sources on Virginia women’s organizations include the records of the **Virginia Women’s Cultural History Project**. A board of twenty-five women initiated this project in 1982 to prepare an exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, “A Share of Honour—Virginia Women, 1600–1945” (Accession 32425). Records from the Virginia Federation of Women’s Clubs also contain histories of various women’s clubs and their work across the state (Accession 34148).

In the nineteenth century, women founded groups with the intention of improving society. In 1805, three prominent Richmond women formed the **Female Humane Association**, now known as the Memorial Foundation for Children, to help orphaned girls (Accession

26532). The **Home for Needy Confederate Women** provided a group home for poverty-stricken widows, sisters, and daughters of Confederate soldiers (Accessions 34092, 34669). An all-female board of directors oversaw all aspects of the Home's operations.

Women's religious organizations often carried out charitable work. The 1849–1861 records of the **Ladies Sewing Society of St. Paul's Church** in Suffolk contain the minutes and constitution of the group, organized to raise money for the church (Accession 33204). The **Ladies Foreign Missionary Union** records (1884–1887) document planned missions to India and Japan (Accession 21281). The **Faithful Circle of Kings' Daughters** ran a summer rest program for working women between 1894 and 1909 (Accession 38672). The 1943–1958 ledgers of the **Women's Missionary Society of Virginia** indicate how they used funds for missions (Accession 38158).

Secular community service groups include the **Barton Heights Woman's Club**, formed in 1907 to start and maintain a kindergarten project (Accession 26770). During the World Wars, the Club likewise took up a number of war efforts, planting Victory gardens and volunteering for plane spotting duty. The **American War Mothers, Richmond chapter**, was organized in 1928 (Accession 30149). Membership applications and minutes list sons who fought in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. The group raised money for Sheltering Arms Hospital and took part in a pilgrimage to France in 1939. For other service group records, see the accounts of the **Richmond Light Infantry Blues Auxiliary**, 1947–1952 (Accession 38226).

Virginian women expressed concern with their role in the economy as consumers and producers. In the nineteenth century, the Lynchburg **Woman's Exchange** worked to foster cooperation between women selling and purchasing each other's products (Accession 21419a–c), and in the twentieth Virginia women formed the **Virginia Citizens Consumer Council** to provide information about legislative issues regarding retail businesses and services (Accession 40992).

Women were also interested in professional alliances. Organized in 1948, the **State Agency Auxiliary** was composed of secretaries and assistants to Virginia's state agency heads (Accession 36071). The Auxiliary had annual luncheons and attended lectures on various subjects throughout the 1950s and 1960s. A scrapbook of the **Business and Professional Women's Club of Richmond** describes the group's work toward equal rights for working and retired women (Accession 32622).

Records of women's rights groups include minutes and reports of the **Equal Suffrage League** of Virginia (Accession 22002; online finding aid), which later became the **League of Women Voters** (Accession 27804), and the **Virginia Equal Rights Amendment Ratification Council** (Accession 31486). Women's interests in politics can be seen in programs from the **Virginia Woman's Forum**, first sponsored in 1949 by Miller and Rhoads department store in Richmond (Accessions 29300, 30788). Examining political and economic issues, the forum focused on “woman's place in a changing world” and challenged the domesticity associated with the 1950s. Topics included “Ethics in Action,” “Searching for Priorities,” and the “American Dream—Retrospect and Prospect.” For more records concerning women and politics, see the **Service Legion of Richmond's** 1924 resolutions on the Woodrow Wilson's death (Accession 27329).

Women formed organizations devoted to self-education and literary interests, as well as recreation. The minutes of the **Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs** describe how the organization tied such groups together into a league to do social work and community service (Accession 25115, online finding aid). The **Richmond**

Horticultural Association, organized in 1952 as the Maymont Nature Association, cultivated interests in horticulture and conservation (Accessions 36137, 32161, 35245). Later the Association advocated for the formation of Richmond's Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden.

HEREDITARY AND PATRIOTIC SOCIETIES

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked a period of dramatic growth for patriotic and hereditary societies. At the turn of the century, women's hereditary societies played an important role in historical preservation. Today, societies bring together descendants, restore historical sites, research genealogies, and provide educational opportunities.

The goal of preserving history—by saving historic houses, conserving county records, or commemorating a battle—is reflected in the records of many hereditary and patriotic societies. Founded in 1924, the Hanover branch of the all-female **Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities** marked battlefields and commissioned tablets for historic sites (Accession 33551). Soon after the Civil War, the **Ladies Memorial Associations of Fredericksburg** (Accession 28769, miscellaneous reel 534) and **Petersburg** (Accession 24254) marked and maintained Confederate graves. In the twentieth century, the Rotary Club in Richmond organized **Battlefield Markers Association** (Accession 24520) to mark battlefields and other places in Virginia connected with the war. The Association's records include photographs, certificates, newspaper clippings, and sketches of monuments. Concerns over deteriorating documents led to the preservation of county records by hereditary and patriotic societies, including the **Daughters of Colonial Wars** (Accessions 27384a–c) and the **Colonial Daughters of the Seventeenth Century, Jamestown chapter** (Accession 28310).

Other restoration records include reports and minutes from the **Confederate Memorial Literary Society**, which restored Jefferson Davis's mansion (Accession 29406); the **Kenmore Association** (now known as the George Washington's Fredericksburg Foundation), which restored the former home of Fielding and Betty Washington Lewis, sister to George Washington (Accession 28413, miscellaneous reel 495); the **St. John's Church Restoration Association** (Accession 38533, miscellaneous reel 2643); the **Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities** (Accessions 39242, 32900); and the **Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation**, which preserved Stratford Hall (Accession 29577).

Organization records also contain genealogical information. Virginia DAR member Annie M. Sayre kept a journal detailing her work as state chairman of the **Committee on Real Daughters** (Accession 22030a–b). The **Daughters of the American Colonists**, celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1946, compiled genealogical records of prominent families from New England, the Mid-Atlantic region, and the southern colonies (Accession 22720a–c). The **Orange County Bicentennial Register** contains signatures of the descendants from the county's founders (Accession 20956), and the **Virginia Genealogical Society** records contain pedigree charts (Accession 34672, miscellaneous reels 1199–1200; Accession 34361).

Records at the Library of Virginia document a wide variety of groups, including the Colonial Daughters of the Seventeenth Century, the Daughters of Colonial Wars, the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution, the Society of the Cincinnati, the Daughters of the War of 1812, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

POLITICS

In February 1766, **Westmoreland County citizens** were “alarmed at Attempts foreign and domestic to reduce the People of this Country to a State of abject and detestable slavery” (Accession 21318). The group protested the forced taxation of Britain’s new Stamp Act by binding together to prevent the execution of the act and punishing those who used the stamped paper. About 110 citizens signed the resolutions long before guns were fired at Concord.

Virginians often organized in response to legislative and economic issues, sometimes connected with war. The **Spotsylvania Committee Resolves** and Minutes of 1774 chronicle resolutions for non-importation and non-exportation following the orders of the first Continental Congress of 1774 (Accession 22781). During the Civil War, 72 men in Alexandria formed the **Alexandria Union Association** (Accession 14051). The minute book lists those who became members by paying dues and swearing an oath of loyalty to the United States. When the Spanish-American began in 1898, some **Norfolk residents** signed a petition to form a naval militia for the “preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, the enforcement of law, the protection of property, and the maintenance of the public tranquility” (Accession 25881).

Some organizations were formed in response to heated political issues. The **Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties** records contain bulletins supporting segregation legislation in the General Assembly and a statement on race relations (Accession 39469). The **Middlesex County Temperance Society** (Accession 30621) and the **Woman’s Christian Temperance Union of Virginia** (Accession 36218, miscellaneous reel 29) maintained that crime was “plainly traceable to the indulgence in intoxicating drinks.” The **Citizens for Temperance without Prohibition** (Accession 40041) opposed legal prohibition while recognizing the problem of intemperance.

Political party and campaign records are also part of the organization records collection. In 1800, **supporters of Thomas Jefferson** met in Richmond to create a Republican ticket of presidential electors who would elect him to the presidency (Accession 40389). Songs, bylaws, and a 1948 constitution from the short-lived **Progressive Party of Virginia** are housed at the Library (Accession 30915), along with letters from the **Wilson-Marshall-Trinkle Club** to elect Woodrow Wilson for President, Thomas Marshall for Vice-President and E. Lee Trinkle for U.S. Senate (Accession 30129). Researchers can explore materials related to Westmoreland Davis’s 1922 Senate campaign (Accession 27881), Henry E. Howell’s gubernatorial campaigns (Accessions 28024, 28083, 28129, 28180, 29469), Mills E. Godwin’s gubernatorial campaign (Accessions 28182, 28165), and the committee that planned Governor George Allen’s inauguration (Accessions 34624, 34681).

FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

Records created by fraternal organizations for men include a ledger, minutes, and rules from the **Ancient Free and Accepted Masons** in Fredericksburg (Accession 28990, miscellaneous reel 545); the charter of **Powhatan Starke Lodge** No. 124 in Petersburg (Accession 27651); and letters and receipts concerning the **Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society** in Ettrick (Accession 29207j). Records of the **Knights of Honor**, Richmond Order, Supreme Lodge No. 265 (Accession 38762); the Goodwill Council No. 3, **Order of Fraternal Americans** (Accession 31708); and the Junior Order, **United American Mechanics** in Rockingham County (Accession 32038) detail efforts to provide benefits to members and to the community at large.

BENEVOLENCE, CHARITY, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Associations worked to assist the needy and improve the community. Formed in 1788, the **Amicable Society of Richmond** was one of the first such organizations in the state (Accession 19730). The Society promised relief for “strangers and wayfarers, in distress, for whom the law makes no provision.” The Society’s records include minutes and attendance records.

In the nineteenth-century, relief organizations worked to help the poor, orphans, prisoners of war, and war veterans. The **Orange Humane Society** (Accession 38148) and the **Jackson Orphan Asylum** in Norfolk educated orphans (Accession 30972; miscellaneous reel 806), while the Children’s Home Society of Virginia provided housing for the underprivileged (Accession 39477). The **Richard Bennett Trust** stipulated that the rents and profits from land left by Bennett to Lower Parish in Nansemond County were to be used by the church wardens for the relief of “poor, aged, or impotent persons” within the parish (Accession 32352; miscellaneous reel 998). The **Confederate States Christian Association for Relief of Prisoners** was organized to provide books, clothing, and medical supplies to imprisoned soldiers; an 1865 benefit concert program is part of the Library’s collection (Accession 35954).

In the twentieth century, organization records reflect continued efforts to help the less fortunate. The **Travelers’ Aid Society of Virginia** was organized by the Young Women’s Christian Association in Richmond. Scrapbooks, correspondence, meeting minutes, and other materials document their work for young women, unwed mothers with children, foreigners, and the physically disabled (Accession 37515, online finding aid; Accession 40059). The **Elizabeth Kates Foundation**, founded in 1942, worked to rehabilitate women incarcerated in Virginia’s prison system (Accession 39472); beginning in 1877, the **Fresh Air Fund** provided country vacations for children from New York City tenements (Accession 36407, online finding aid).

EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

Records related to education in the organization records collection vary from nineteenth-century private academy ledgers to twentieth-century professional associations of librarians and educators. Collections from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries largely contain records listing tuition fees, enrolled pupils, salaries for teachers, and money spent for supplies. Such records include the account books (1847–1881) for **Fleetwood Academy** (Accession 36178, miscellaneous reel 135) and ledgers for **Emory and Henry College** (1836–1929; Accession 38522, miscellaneous reels 2669–2687); **Brookland School** in Albemarle County (1856–1863; Accession 38557); **Alleghany College** (1860–1861; Accession 21573); **Anderson Seminary** in Petersburg (1863–1864; Accession 21158); and **Martha Washington College** (1868–1929; Accession 38523, miscellaneous reels 2664–2668.).

Researchers can also find records of school and administration life beyond tuition. Handwritten student newspapers from **Petersburg Classical Institute**, including *The Democrat* and *The Tattler*, describe politics in the 1830s and include cartoons and jokes about teachers and student life (Accession 23479). An 1853 letter to the superintendent of the first chartered college for women in the state, the **Female Collegiate Institute** in Buckingham County, accuses him of charging female boarders too much to use the piano (Accession 29181). The records of **Washington-Henry Academy** in Hanover County (Accession 32351) contain the original agreement of sub-

scribers to “promote the public Weal from an unaffected attachment to the Interest of the American States.”

During the mid-nineteenth century, the number of academies offering classical education grew; between 1840 and 1860, one hundred new schools opened in Virginia. Catalogs, handbills, and meeting minutes describe the courses offered at **Prince George Academy** (1842; Accession 26032); **Fort Loudoun Seminary** in Winchester (1905; Accession 41047, miscellaneous reel 209); **Shenandoah Normal College** (Accession 40854); **Kilmarnock Seminary** in Lancaster County (Accession 39404); and **Valley Female College** in Winchester (1874; Accession 40795, miscellaneous reel 180).

The records of the **Virginia Education Association** (Accession 29975) document the history of school systems in the Commonwealth, 1870–1963. The collection includes bulletins, certificates, charts, newspaper clippings, correspondence, newsletters, pamphlets, nearly sixty color and black and white photographs and photonegatives of schools, and photographs of teachers, principals, and school board members.

LITERARY AND ARTS-RELATED

Early literary societies formed at schools and practiced debate and oratory. Records at the Library of Virginia document the activities of **Pithonian Society** at the Episcopal High School (1840–1849; Accession 20865); the **Philomathean Society** at Allegheny College (1859–1861; Accession 21573 c4); the **Hermesian and Calliopean societies** at Emory and Henry College (1841–1866; Accession 38093, miscellaneous reels 2314–2324), and the **Norwood Literary Society** at Norwood High School and College in Nelson County (1866–1873; Accession 31453). This society and others like it were established to offer support “for the practice of debate and declamation, and for general culture.”

Literary and arts organizations also grew out of common interests and a shared sense of identity. A scrapbook compiled by the director of **Gesangverein Virginia**, a choral society formed in 1853 by German immigrants in Richmond, contains newspaper clippings, advertisements, announcements, pamphlets, and programs, most of which are in German (Accession 26084). The records of the **Franklin Society and Library Company of Lexington**, 1856–1885, include memorandums, membership records, and receipts detailing the purchase of materials for the library (Accession 38798). Virginia writers and artists banded together to appreciate and encourage each other’s work, as evidenced in a program from the **Virginia Writers Club** (Accession 18784), records from the **Richmond Graphic Arts Club** (Accession 39241) and the bulletins of the **Loudoun Sketch Club** (Accession 37189).

AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Beginning in 1845, the **Virginia State Agricultural Society** encouraged membership through an “annual Cattle-Show and Agricultural Fair” (Accession 23988). The minutes of the **Black Lick Grange**, in Rural Retreat, Wythe County, include the names of members and officers (1875–1879), references to a farm visitation program and a cooperative general store, and a resolution that members “will not

employ, rent or lease our lands to any person who comes among us as a stranger unless they come recommended by some responsible person known to us” (Accession 33549). The **Danville Tobacco Association** focused on selling its special Bright Leaf Tobacco, but in 1948 promised to “remain ever alert and ready to assist our farmer patrons on any and all problems that may arise” (Accession 32168, miscellaneous reels 995–996). The collection includes the charter, minute books (1878–1948), and the president’s annual reports.

VETERANS’ ORGANIZATIONS

On 10 May 1783, a few French and American Revolutionary War officers met to discuss the formation of a society to “perpetuate ...the mutual friendships which have been formed under the pressure of common danger and in many instances, cemented by the blood of the parties.” They formed the **Society of the Cincinnati**; the first Virginia chapter was organized in Fredericksburg in 1783, dissolved in 1824, and was revived in the 1890s. Papers from the Society include letters, meeting minutes, membership rosters, and receipts (Accession 26102).

Veterans’ associations preserve the fraternity between former servicemen and women. Such groups have also sought financial protection for members. The **Society of the Soldiers of the War of 1812**, 2nd district, formed in 1854 to obtain land for veterans (Accession 23308). Veterans’ organizations also worked to commemorate war service and educate civilians. The **Pegram Battalion Association** of Richmond formed in 1883 not only for “fraternal, historical and reverential” purposes, but also “to ensure the observance of a due respect towards the dead of its membership” (Accession 22118). Other groups devoted to preserving historical memory for which the Library holds records are the **Richmond Grays Veteran Association** (Accessions 28072, 19823, 19824a–q, 19825); Company H, **4th Virginia Cavalry Veterans** (Accession 32907), and the **Surry Light Artillery Veterans** (Accessions 34933, 32426).

Perhaps the most well-known of these groups is the **United Confederate Veterans** (Accession 23354, online finding aid). Records for the Virginia Division include minutes, applications, rosters, scrapbooks, letters, and publications (Accession 38060, miscellaneous reel 2311; Accession 36703, online finding aid). Rosters and minutes for Virginia chapters at the Library include the General Turner Ashby Camp (Accession 32461); the Westmoreland Gap Camp (Accession 35624, miscellaneous reel 1649); the Berkeley County Camp (Accession 32485); the Neff-Rice Camp (Accession 34343); the Magruder Camp (Accession 20718); and the Lawson-Ball Camp (Accession 39405).

One of the most unusual chapter records is a 1910 scrapbook from the **A.P. Hill Camp** in Petersburg. Snapshots and newspaper articles chronicle their visit to Springfield, Massachusetts, where the veterans attended Independence Day celebrations at the invitation of the Union veterans’ organization, the Grand Army of the Republic (Accession 31524).

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